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Bonds to the homeland: Patterns and determinants of women' transnational travel frequency among three immigrant groups in Germany

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Bonds to the homeland: Patterns and determinants of transnational travel frequency
among three immigrant groups in Germany


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frequency among three immigrant groups in Germany

Abstract

Technology developments have changed immigrants' adaptation patterns in modern societies, allowing immigrants to sustain dense, complex connections with homeland while adjusting in the host country, a new phenomenon termed *transnationalism*. As empirical studies on immigrant transnationalism are still scarce, the purpose of this study was to investigate mean levels and determinants of a core component of transnationalism - transnational travel. Hypotheses were based on context of exiting homeland, living conditions in Germany, and demographic and sociocultural variables. Transnational travel behaviour was assessed as frequency of return trips in three immigrant groups in Germany: ethnic Germans, Russian Jews, and Turks. Interviews were conducted with 894 women participants from these groups. Results showed substantial transnational travel behaviour in all groups with Turks reporting higher levels than ethnic Germans and Russian Jews. Interindividual differences in transnational travel within groups were also examined. Results indicated similarities (e.g., network size in home country related positively to transnational travel frequency in all groups) and group-specific associations (e.g., co-ethnic identifying related positively to transnational travel frequency among Turks, but negatively for the other groups). Our study highlights the need for a new understanding of immigration and emphasizes the consideration of group-specific mechanisms in transnational travel behaviour.

Keywords: transnationalism, Germany, immigrant, acculturation, travel

Migration today has been indicative of a new class of migrants refusing to lose touch with homeland while successfully adjusting in the host nation (Leyendecker, 2011). Transportation and telecommunication developments allow these migrants to maintain connections to family and kin and regularly visit the homeland (Portes, 2003). Scholars have conceptualized these phenomena as transnationalism. Van Oudenhoven and Ward (2013) suggested that transnational activity is one of the three crucial factors that are changing the face of world migration and contribute to the fading of such notion as majority cultures.

Acknowledging various definitions (Guarnizo & Smith, 1998; Vertovec, 1999 etc.), we agree most with Portes et al. (1999, p. 219) in delimiting transnationalism to “occupations and activities that require regular and sustained social contacts over time across national borders for their implementation”. This definition allows a clear operationalization for conducting empirical research as well as delimiting a broad term to a perspective that deals precisely with the activities of migrants. After much conceptual debate on the topic, Kearney (1995) pointed out the immediate need for more, in-depth and comparative *empirical* studies of transnational human behavior. Portes (2003) supports Kearney’s suggestion and adds that certain groups are likely to be more transnational than others, but also that there is variation in the frequency, depth, and range of transnational ties within immigrant groups. Notably, most transnationalism literature focuses on male immigrants and their transnational behaviour, except for rare studies on women migrant domestic workers (Moors, 2003; Vertovec, 1999). With this study we attempted to draw attention to the underresearched group in transnational studies – women. Researchers agree that travels to the homeland are a core component of transnationalism (Huang, Heller, & Ramshaw, 2013) because they require substantial time and financial investments (Hitchcock, 1999), at least more than telephone calls or online contact.

The aim of this study was to conduct a comparative empirical investigation of real-world between-group differences and individual level determinants of transnational travel. We studied three groups of immigrant women in Germany: Turks; Ethnic Germans; and Russian Jews.

Variations among ethnic German, Russian Jewish, and Turkish groups

Germany holds a prominent position on the global migration map, being called an undeclared immigration country (Thranhardt, 1995). However, the immigrant population in Germany is as heterogeneous as it is multitudinous. On the one hand, this heterogeneity limits the generalisation from one group to others; on the other hand it offers an opportunity for comparative immigration research. Germany's dense transportation network also offers great opportunities for transnational travel behaviour.

The three groups studied here, ethnic German repatriates (also Aussiedler, further termed ethnic Germans), Jewish migrants from countries of the former Soviet Union (further termed Russian Jews), and Turkish labour migrants (further termed Turks) are the three largest immigrant groups in Germany. However, these groups have different contexts of exit from the home country and reception in the host country which affects propensity to transnational activity (Portes, 2003). Immigrants escaping violence or discrimination tend to bring contact with the homeland to a minimum. Conversely, migrants moving during the times of peace visit their home country often. The nature of incorporation into the host society also plays an important role as large co-ethnic concentrations create "multiple opportunities for transnational enterprise, while extensive outside discrimination forces the group inwards encouraging durable contacts with its home communities" (Portes, 2003, p. 880).

Portes' theoretical considerations allow formulating expectations regarding the groups studied. For ethnic Germans, who lived in a German diaspora in the former Soviet Union,

discrimination has been an important push factor for migration (Dietz, 1999). After arrival in Germany, most of them received immediate German citizenship and were provided with extensive integration and welfare programs (Dietz, 2006). The combination of negative exit context and positive entry context makes this group unlikely to travel back or maintain transnational contact.

Russian Jews also experienced a negative exit context due to anti-Semitism, political instability, and economic struggles in the USSR successor states (Dietz, Lebok & Polian, 2002). For this group, however, the entry context was also rather negative, as they often experienced tensions with the established Jewish groups in Germany (Dietz, Lebok & Polian, 2002). As a result, Russian Jews experienced both negative exit and entry contexts. They are thus hypothesized to be more prone to maintaining contacts and visiting the former home country than ethnic German repatriates.

Turks are the last significant immigrant group in Germany. This group, a classic labour migrant group, mainly has economic reasons for migration and high intentions for return to Turkey at some point (Nauck, 2001). They thus have a rather positive exit context. Due to the comparatively large cultural distance to German population (based on history, language, religion), however, the entry context is less positive and often marked by segregation from the German mainstream society (Nauck, 2001). These factors point to rather frequent visits to the home country among Turks. Following these arguments, we expected the ethnic groups to differ in the intensity of transnational travel.

Hypothesis 1: Ethnic Germans go back the least, and Turks to go back most frequently with Russian Jews in between these two groups.

Explaining variation within groups of ethnic Germans, Russian Jews, and Turks

Besides group differences, the heterogeneous nature of groups allows investigating differences within groups (Glick Schiller et al., 1992). Guarnizo et al. (2003) suggested three perspectives to be most informative for individual determinants of immigrant transnationalism: (a) classical theories of the role of *individual factors* in immigrant assimilation; (b) contemporary theories of contextual embeddedness as determinant of immigrants' *incorporation to host societies*; and (c) the *social networks* in terms of contacts and cultural retention. In our study we addressed all three perspectives with specific determinants.

Individual factors. These include demographic variables that represent individuals' background, such as age, income, gender, etc. Acculturative changes depend substantially on the age of immigrants (Cheung et al., 2011) with older individuals being more attached to the heritage culture. We thus consider age as a possible demographic determinant. The impact of education on transnational activism is more ambiguous: higher level of education can both foster (more intellectual involvement with home country affairs) and impede (through faster integration into host society) connections with homeland (Guarnizo et al., 2003). Same ambiguity exists for financial situation: higher income grants access to travel but also makes remaining in a host country more attractive (Portes et al., 1999). Thus, *Hypothesis 2: age is positively related to transnational tourism behaviour*. In addition, we explore the effects of education, and financial situation on transnational travel.

Incorporation in host society. The variables of this category include length of stay in the host country, perceived discrimination from host community, and willingness to leave the host country. Assimilation theory suggests the longer migrants reside in the host country the less connection they retain with the homeland and therefore they would be less prone to visiting regularly (Guarnizo et al., 2003). Conversely, migrants who experience discrimination or think

about leaving the host country may seek social support in the home country and thus may travel home more often to keep in touch with family and kin (Nauck, 2001). Property rights in the home and host country are also catalysts to going back and forth on a regular basis (Vertovec, 1999). Thus, *Hypothesis 3: individuals whose length of stay in the host country is shorter, who perceive more discrimination, think more about leaving the host country forever and have property in the home country go back to the country of origin more often.*

Social networks and cultural retention. Social contacts and sociocultural retention are examined. These include measures of social ties in both home and host countries, language use, activities with members of ethnic and host groups, practice of ethnic and host cultures, but also the identification as a member of ethnic group or as German. Larger and ethnically homophile networks can stimulate transnational activism, because social contacts require social exchange for contact maintenance (Guarnizo et al., 2003). Ethnic language retention, i.e. whether the language of origin is used for family communication (Nauck, 2001), is expected to promote connections with kin back home and subsequently return trips. Vertovec (1999) deemed ethnic identification as one of the crucial determinants of migrant transnationalism, and we expect low identification with the ethnic group and high identification with the host society to correspond to fewer transnational travels. Following these considerations, *Hypothesis 4: individuals across all groups who use ethnic language in daily communication more, practice ethnic culture, have more social connections in the home country, communicate with ethnic counterparts in the host country, and identify more with the home and less with the host country go back to the country of origin more often.*

It is overdue that more empirical data on transnationalism behaviours are provided in the literature. Our study is an important step into this direction: it probably is one of the first studies

examining the combined effects of these three groups of independent variables defined by Guarnizo et al. (2003) –on the dependent variable of transnational travel behaviour.

Method

Sample

Data collection for ethnic Germans and Turks occurred in 2007-2008. Respondents were randomly selected from the lists provided by registry offices in two large cities in Germany (see Silbereisen et al., 2012, for details). Russian Jews were sampled at the same time, but had to be approached by snowball sampling, as this group cannot be identified through registries. Data from 282 ethnic Germans, 254 Russian Jews, and 358 Turks were analysed in the current study.

Measures

Interviews were always conducted with the mothers in the families. Women interviewers fluent in German and respondent's language conducted the structured interviews thus information is standardized across the ethnic groups. The comparability of the questionnaires across languages was ensured by translation-back-translation method. In order to improve the feasibility of the study, instruments were used that are short, but also proved to assess the constructs reliably.

Transnational travel. Participants were directly asked how often they travel back to the home country, with answer options being "0 – never", 1 – "more seldom", 2 – "once every 2-3 years, 3 – "once a year", "4 – several times a year".

Demographics. Demographic variables were assessed by participants' self-reports. Data included age, length of stay, and property ownership in Germany and/or in the home country (answers were included in the analysis as two separate variables). The level of education was

assessed by a question on the highest level of completed education using an internationally comparable format (Silbereisen et al., 2012). The financial situation was reported with options from “1- I can afford anything I want” to “5 – My income is absolutely insufficient” (reverse coded). Further, participants were asked if they want to return to home country (coded as ‘1’) or if do not have such intentions (coded ‘0’).

Discrimination. The perceived discrimination measure was adopted from Strobl and Kühnel (2000) and is calculated as a mean of respondents’ perceived discrimination in several spheres: university or workplace, governmental and official establishments, bars and restaurants, during grocery shopping, and during communication with neighbors. The response options included “1” (discrimination) and “0” (no discrimination) in a given domain during the last twelve months. The index was the number of domains an individual experienced discrimination in.

Social networks. To evaluate ties in home and host countries participants were given a list of different occupations and asked to name people in those occupations whom they know personally (Lin, Fu, & Hsung, 2001). In addition, for the host country, participants reported whether the person they know is of their ethnicity or host ethnicity. The social networks sizes in home and host countries were calculated by summing the number of individuals known, and the composition of the network in host country was determined as a proportion of same-ethnicity individuals in the host country network.

Language spoken at home. The language use measure was adapted from Hazuda, Stern, and Haffner (1988.) We included two items: ethnic language use with child and with partner. The two items assessing this family language use correlated substantially in all groups (EG, $r=.44$; RJ, $r=.41$; Turks, $r=.45$).

Acculturation. We used acculturation measures developed by Ryder, Alden, and Paulhus (2000) (i.e. “I believe in the values of [ethnic or host] culture”). Answers were provided on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from “completely disagree” to “completely agree”. The means were calculated separately for ethnic and host acculturation for further analysis. Scales showed acceptable reliability for all three ethnic groups (ethnic acculturation: EG, $\alpha=.75$; RJ, $\alpha=.78$; Turks, $\alpha=.77$; host acculturation: EG, $\alpha=.73$; RJ, $\alpha=.79$; Turks, $\alpha=.74$). Confirmatory factor analyses showed factorial invariance for these multi-item acculturation scales.

Identification. Identification was assessed with two separate variables as responses to questions “How strongly do you identify as German?” and “How strongly do you identify as ethnic German/Russian Jew/Turk?” Response options ranged from “completely disagree” to “completely agree” on a 6-point Likert-type scale. These single indicators have proven to be reliable measures of cultural identification across various groups (Stoessel, Titzmann & Silbereisen, 2012).

Analyses

ANOVA analyses with Scheffe’s post-hoc tests were used to examine ethnic group differences in transnational travel based on our theorization of differences on the contexts of exit and entry (controlling for age, education and financial situation). All other hypotheses were tested with ordinary least squares regression analyses for the three ethnic groups separately. Three blocks of variables were entered as independents: 1) age, education, and financial situation, 2) determinants of the context of migration, and 3) sociocultural retention and identification determinants.

Results

Variations among ethnic German, Russian Jewish, and Turkish groups

Descriptive procedures showed transnational activism in the sample, with almost 53% of the participants indicating that they travel home every 2-3 years or more. The Chi-square test showed (Table 1) that the ethnic Germans and Russian Jews fall with significantly greater likelihood into the „Never“ and „More seldom“ categories, whereas Turks were overrepresented in the “Once every 2-3 years” and “Once a year” categories.

Table 1. Frequency of travel to the home country in the three groups of the study

	Frequency of home visits				
	Never	More seldom	Once every 2-3 years	Once every year	Several times a year
Ethnic Germans	29.1% (5.4)	40.8% (4.5)	15.2% (-3.8)	11.0% (-4.8)	3.9% (-.7)
Russian Jews	22.0% (2.3)	37.8% (3.4)	18.9% (-2.5)	18.1% (-2.3)	3.1% (-1.2)
Turks	2.0% (-6.7)	7.8% (-6.9)	41.7% (5.4)	41.7% (6.2)	6.7% (1.6)

Note. Standardized cell residuals are presented in parentheses. Pearson Chi-Square 279.025 ($p < .001$, $df = 8$)

Mean group differences in determinants were also examined with one-way ANOVA tests (except for Chi-Square for real estate). Except for age and real estate ownership in the host country, there are significant differences between groups in mean levels of determinants (Table 2). Many similarities exist between the ethnic Germans and Russian Jews since both groups migrated from the former USSR, while Turks are a classic labor migrant group. (Dietz, 1999; Kaya, 2007). Ethnic Germans and Russian Jews have a similar level of education, length of stay, thoughts about returning to the home country, real estate in home country, social network in the home country, social network composition, and ethnic identification, while Turks significantly differ from both groups. They are less educated, have been in Germany longer but think about returning to Turkey more, maintain more property in Turkey, maintain larger social networks at

home as well as have more co-ethnic friends in Germany, and have higher levels of identification than the other two groups. These differences in key factors point out the different ethno-cultural niches in which individuals of the three groups live and may be the background for group differences in transnational travel.

Table 2. Significance of mean differences in determinants across ethnic groups

	Mean ^a (SD)		
	Ethnic Germans	Russian Jews	Turks
Age	35.53 ^a (6.91)	36.62 ^a (7.04)	36.72 ^a (6.34)
Education	3.8 ^a (1.05)	4.4 ^b (.88)	1.7 ^c (1.00)
Financial situation	3.07 ^a (.89)	3.19 ^{a,b} (.92)	3.33 ^b (1.02)
Length of stay	12.06 ^a (5.47)	11.36 ^a (3.86)	19.76 ^b (9.39)
Discrimination	.22 ^a (.27)	.31 ^b (.32)	.20 ^a (.28)
Thoughts returning home country	1.33 ^a (.59)	1.31 ^a (.61)	1.77 ^b (.87)
Real estate in host country (%) *	.19 ^a	.22 ^a	.24 ^a
Real estate in home country (%) *	.05 ^a	.07 ^a	.36 ^b
Ethnic language use at home	1.57 ^a (.63)	1.21 ^b (.46)	1.33 ^c (.49)
Acculturation to ethnic values	4.95 ^a (1.03)	4.96 ^{a,b} (.99)	5.1 ^b (1.02)
Acculturation to host values	4.78 ^a (.1.04)	4.33 ^b (1.16)	4.04 ^c (1.33)
Social network (host country)	5.91 ^a (2.69)	7.12 ^b (2.37)	5.45 ^a (2.97)
Social network (home country)	3.65 ^a (3.05)	4.31 ^a (2.92)	5.30 ^b (2.73)
Social network composition	.77 ^a (.28)	.71 ^a (.25)	.83 ^b (.24)
Identification (ethnic)	3.84 ^a (2.15)	3.57 ^a (1.31)	5.47 ^b (1.32)
Identification (host)	2.64 ^b (1.88)	1.47 ^a (1.08)	1.51 ^a (1.21)

Note. Any means not sharing a subscript are significantly different at $p < .05$ in a univariate ANOVA with Sheffe's tests for all continuous variables. * Chi-Square test.

ANOVA results provide partial support for Hypothesis 1. The transnational travel scores differ in the direction predicted ($F=62.49$, $df=5$, $p=.000$), however the Scheffe's post-hoc test showed only the Turkish group mean score ($M=2.4$, $SD=.8$) to differ significantly from the other two groups. Although the mean score of Russian Jews ($M=1.4$, $SD=1.1$) is higher than for ethnic Germans ($M=1.2$, $SD=1.1$), this difference was not statistically significant. Of the three control variables, education and financial situation had significant positive contributions.

Explaining variation within groups of ethnic Germans, Russian Jews, and Turks

Ordinary least squares regression analyses were conducted to test the predictions of Hypotheses 2 to 4, referring to interindividual differences of transnational travel. Analyses provided only partial support for Hypotheses 2 to 4 with results varying between groups. Table 3 shows the Beta values and variance explained for all groups. The amount of total variance explained by the final model differs substantially between ethnic groups (47% for ethnic Germans; 24 % for Russian Jews and Turks).

Table 3. Standardized Regression Coefficients for Determinants of Transnationalism

	Ethnic Germans			Russian Jews			Turks		
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
	<i>Beta</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>Beta</i>
<i>Individual factors</i>									
Age	-.07	.10	.12	-.05	.06	.01	.04	.03	.04
Education	.24**	.18**	.12	.12	.08	.12	.19**	.18**	.16*
Financial situation	.09	.08	.11	-.09	-.04	-.12	.21**	.20**	.14*
<i>Incorporation in host society</i>									
Length of stay		-.39***	-.26**		-.21**	-.11		-.02	-.08
Discrimination		-.12*	-.07		-.19**	-.17*		.06	.05
Thoughts returning to home country		.09	.09		.10	.09		.19*	.19**
Real estate in host country		.11	.14*		-.04	.00		.04	.01
Real estate in home country		.37***	.28***		.17*	.12		.10	.10
<i>Social networks and cultural retention</i>									
Ethnic language use at home			-.04			-.09			.14*
Acculturation to ethnic values			.15*			.09			-.01
Acculturation to host values			-.07			-.02			.06
Social network (host country)			-.07			.10			.03
Social network (home country)			.14*			.16*			.16*
Social network composition ^a			-.21**			-.22**			-.09
Identification (ethnic)			-.23**			-.16*			.26***
Identification (host)			-.14*			-.08			.03
R squared model	.07	.36	.47	.02	.13	.24	.08	.13	.24

Note. *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$; ^a Reflects share of ethnic contacts among all contacts held in Germany.

Our main interest was which determinants were related to transnational travel after all other potential sources of inter-individual variation were accounted for. For this reason, we

concentrate here on the results of the final regression step, but for information all regression steps are shown in Table 3. This third regression step contained all three determinant groups.

Ethnic Germans. As predicted, Ethnic Germans went home the least with substantial within-group variation. The length of stay in Germany had a significant negative effect on return trips ($\beta = -.26$, $p < .01$) for this group, which was not surprising. Surprising are the findings of social network composition ($\beta = -.21$, $p < .01$) and ethnic identification ($\beta = -.23$, $p < .01$) negatively affecting return trips. We expected identification with ethnic values and socializing mostly with co-ethnics while in Germany to facilitate return travel. It is possible that for ethnic Germans ethnic identification actually means feeling German, not Russian, and having co-ethnic friends means having German friends, not Russian. In this case, higher levels of these variables would indeed preclude ethnic Germans from traveling to the former USSR. In which regard, it is also feasible that for this group both ethnic and host identification ($\beta = -.14$, $p < .05$) means identifying as German, and therefore both variables are significantly negatively related to transnational travel. Some factors, however, facilitate return trips for some members of this group. Consistent with our hypotheses, acculturation to ethnic values ($\beta = .15$, $p < .05$), real estate in home and host country ($\beta = .28$, $p < .001$; $\beta = .14$, $p < .05$) and social connections ($\beta = .14$, $p < .05$) in the former USSR correlate with higher propensity of visitation.

Russian Jews. The findings for Russian Jews are to some extent similar to those of ethnic Germans, where social network composition ($\beta = -.22$, $p < .01$) and ethnic identification ($\beta = -.16$, $p < .05$) negatively affect return trips, while social connections in the home country facilitate them ($\beta = .16$, $p < .05$). This again raises the question of what ethnic identification means for this group: does it mean identifying with Russian people or identifying with Jews? In the first case, ethnic

identification would result in more trips to the former USSR. In the second case, it would result in preference to remain in Germany or, alternatively, in trips to Israel. Our results point out to the second case. Another unexpected finding emerged in terms of discrimination. Higher levels of discrimination are expected to compel immigrants to travel to the home country, which is not the case for the Russian Jews in our study ($\beta = -.17$, $p < .05$). One explanation might be that Russian Jewish immigrants counteract discrimination by fewer return travels in order to affirm their belonging to the German context. This explanation seems particularly relevant for the Russian Jews, a group that neither received instant citizenship (like the ethnic Germans) nor can look back at a long history of being in Germany (like the Turks). This specific situation may be a reason why this group reported the highest levels of discrimination of all groups (see Table 2).

Turks. Turkish group was the only one for whom demographic variables of education ($\beta = .16$, $p < .05$) and financial situation ($\beta = .14$, $p < .05$) have positive effect on transnational travel. This is probably a consequence of this group being labor migrants (Nauck, 2001) indicated by the highest mean of all three groups in thoughts about returning to the homeland. These thoughts were significantly positively related to transnational travel ($\beta = .19$, $p < .05$). Using ethnic language at home ($\beta = .14$, $p < .05$), having social connections in Turkey ($\beta = .16$, $p < .05$), and strong ethnic identification ($\beta = .26$, $p < .001$) are all significantly positively related to travel to Turkey. Being unique in its nature (labor migrants) and maintaining the feeling of “temporariness”, Turks tend to retain the ethnic language, connections with the homeland, identify Turkish, and travel to Turkey the most. This is the only group in our study for which all significant coefficients are positive: all significant factors facilitate, not hinder, transnational travel to Turkey.

Discussion

The current study provides evidence for existence of transnational travel behaviour among three largest immigrant groups in Germany. This finding shows that today many immigrants have two homes if they want. Our findings support the earlier hypothesis by Thanopoulos and Walle (1988) that various ethnic groups no longer are cast into a new mould which is distinctively host. Advances in communications technology and transportation allow immigrants to engage in “border relations” with the homeland and host societies (Kaya, 2007). Our findings also show that transnational travel is not restricted to small business elite as suggested by Vertovec (1999), but can be found in various immigrant populations, with ethnic differences in levels of transnational travels. Turks traveled home the most, followed by Russian Jews and ethnic Germans. It is feasible to assume that, considering the largest cultural distance from native Germans, Turks use frequent trips home to guard against melting – a hypothesis that warrants follow-up qualitative study. Differences were also observed and predicted within groups, but only one association was found to differ significantly between groups: ethnic identification was positively associated with transnational travel frequency among Turks, whereas it was negatively related to it in the other two groups.

Variations among ethnic German, Russian Jewish, and Turkish groups

Why the groups show such a different pattern is a promising topic for discussion. Variation in important determinants may be one answer. The home country social network, for example, was a significant determinant of transnational travel in all groups (Table 3), with the Turkish group having the largest home social network followed by Russian Jews and ethnic Germans. When tested, however, the ethnic differences in this determinant could not fully explain the ethnic differences found in transnational travel. Similarly, ethnic differences were observed even after we controlled for age, education and financial situation. But it also seems

unlikely that ethnic differences in transnational travel frequency can be traced back to a single construct, especially when considering the complexity of the contexts of exit from the home country and reception in the host country (Portes, 2003). This complexity is reflected in the ethnic differences found in many determinant variables of our study. Taken together, the results regarding the ethnic differences in transnational travel were mainly in line with our expectations, but results could not convey a clear empirical answer as to reasons for these differences.

Explaining variation within groups of ethnic Germans, Russian Jews, and Turks

We find almost an equal number of commonalities and differences in individual level determinants of transnational travel. Length of stay, thoughts about leaving Germany, home country real estate, and acculturation to ethnic values have the same direction of association on transnational travel for all three groups. Among those, acculturation to ethnic values, home country social network size and thoughts of leaving the host country are positively related to transnational travel. These findings are consistent with those of Thanopoulos & Walle (1988) who found speaking fluent Greek and acculturation to Greek values to increase propensity of Greek-Americans' traveling to Greece. This finding has implications for immigrant families and organizations. Promoting heritage tourism is one implication, stimulating children's ethnic language and cultural skills to bolster involvement with homeland is another.

While all three groups of determinants outlined by Guarnizo et al. (2003) were relevant for explaining interindividual differences, some unexpected findings emerged. Ethnic identification was positively related to transnational travel only for the Turkish group, while for ethnic Germans and Russian Jews it was significantly negatively related to the return frequency. Most likely, this difference is due to ethnic Germans' and Russian Jews' ethnic in-groups being primarily in Germany. In this case strong ethnic identification would actually preclude visits to

the country of origin. The effects of the social network composition fit well with this explanation: a higher share of co-ethnics in networks in Germany was also a negative determinant of home returns in these two groups, which again points out that their co-ethnic communities are within Germany rather than in the heritage country. It is likely that these co-ethnic communities provide immigrants with all necessary coping and social support resources (Reynolds, 2011) thus reducing the need to return to the home country. The Turkish community, however, started as a labor migrant group (Kaya, 2007) and regarded itself as temporary, which is seen in the high mean for thoughts about leaving Germany. Thus stronger ethnic identification is more likely to refer to ethnic communities in the heritage country, which results in more visits to Turkey. In general, our results seem to reflect the specific situations of the three groups studied, including similarities related to the immigration situation and differences related to group characteristics (being Diaspora migrant, Jewish refugee, or labour migrant).

Strengths, limitations, and future research

This study is a novel attempt to empirically investigate transnational travel in a comparative design, with a randomly selected sample of non-elite migrants – strengths not to be overlooked. It contributes to the current body of literature on transnationalism by investigating transnational travel as a core component of transnationalism as more global multifaceted construct (Vertovec, 1999). The determinants of transnational travel identified in this study can be used by other researchers for replications, applications in cross-cultural contexts, and guidance for qualitative inquiry.

Limitations exist with regard to the generalizability to other populations, other cities, or rural areas, because data collection was restricted to two large cities in Germany. Our sample was also gender- and age-homogenous. This was intended for reducing effects of interviewer-

participant-relations, which would have been more or less likely depending on the ethnic background. However, couples are known to be highly similar in attitudes and behaviour (Blackwell & Lichter, 2000) and results would probably not differ substantially if partners would have participated. Finally, the measures used in this study were limited. The variables chosen for explaining ethnic differences in transnational travel were based on theoretical considerations by Guarnizo et al. (2003). and had to be short, including the criterion variable, because we only had a limited time available for interviews, but many constructs to assess. Considering the limitations of this study, we suggest that future research endeavors include collecting data from other populations. Especially participants from various cohorts and age groups (i.e. at different phases of the life course) could be interviewed to uncover age-related differences in transnational travel. Research on additional constructs also seems promising, including cultural differences in dealing with family issues or tourism policies. Finally, further studies are encouraged using additional measures of transnationalism in general, and for transnational travel in particular. As these constructs are fairly new, qualitative research could add to the quantitative findings presented here, as it may elicit meanings of transnationalism and ethnic identification and enhance the generalized quantitative picture.

To conclude, this study provides evidence that migration as a one-way ticket is challenged in globalized societies. Now immigrants move back and forth between countries, but the reasons and mechanisms of these moves differ. The implications are at hand. Immigrant families have to deal with two cultures in contact and especially adolescents in these families have to adapt to the heritage and host culture simultaneously (Leyendecker, 2011; Titzmann, 2012).

Transnationalism may be a way for families to strengthen the simultaneous adaptation of adolescents to both cultures, which is suggested to be one of the most successful strategies of

adaptation to new cultural settings (Leyendecker, 2011). In addition, modern societies are in a competition for a well-educated workforce (Boeri et al., 2012) and transnationalism in this regard also means that individuals who come to a new country may easily return. Modern societies thus may need to invest more efforts into integration and support to provide future perspectives for immigrants, in order to make staying an attractive alternative. We demonstrate that patterns of immigration change and, as a result, societies need to adjust accordingly.

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